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E. J. FIEB, Pres.

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE.

PRISON LABOR.

A Discussion of the Subject After a Long Investigation.

To the Editor of The Indianapolis News:

The prison bill, which has passed both Houses, and which will, no doubt, be signed by the Governor, is a move in the right direction, and will result in much good to the inmates of the Michigan City penitentiary.

For some years I have studied the question, and, being specially interested along these lines, will give you some of my own ideas relative to the prisons of Indiana, and will aim to touch upon the question in general.

Early in March, 1891, I undertook to get what information was to be had, statistically, and I found that the United States Government had issued in 1888 a full report upon the prisons of the country, and from that report learned that 13,888 males and 388 females were working upon the public account system; 15,135 males and 245 females were working upon the contract system; 4,603 males and 98 females were working upon the piece price system; 5,738 males and 21 females were leased out, while 12,220 convicts, males, and 2,880 females were engaged in prison duties; 8,465 males and 337 females were either idle or sick.

The value of the goods produced by the convicts reached the grand total of \$23,733,992.12, which would require \$5,354,410.00 to pay the cost of the goods.

The income of the prisons was as follows:

Convict labor	\$3,512,669.50
Labor, reformatory	7,831.50
Appropriation	7,817,271.35
Total	\$11,330,941.05

The expenses were: Running expenses, \$7,100,104.62; all other expenses, \$2,961,435.21; total, \$10,061,539.83.

In 1888 a supplemental report was made and it was found that our prisoners had greatly increased, as is shown by the following statistics:

	Year	1886	1890
Engaged in labor	30,533	38,415	38,415
Engaged in prison duties	8,500	8,500	8,500
Idle and sick	2,633	7,093	7,093
Totals	41,666	53,913	53,913

It will be noticed that the idle increased greatly owing to the change of laws relating to the employment of convicts.

In 1886 the value was estimated to be \$19,042,423, showing 21.5 per cent. decrease. This result is partly due to the non-employment of convicts in the States where prison labor was prohibited by law; but the shrinkage of all values, I think, was a main factor. My own experience has been that values have shrunk since 1883, 20 to 33-1/3 per cent. on all manufactured articles.

Depression of business also has caused a lessening of the prison product just as it has in all industries outside of prisons. It seems remarkably strange that the wages paid by contractors and lessors to State and convict labor are so low.

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Improvement over what we have had. This bill allows the prison authorities to lease 50 per cent. of the prison population to contractors on the lease or piece price system; yet not more than 100 shall be employed in any one industry. The balance to be employed in prison duties and upon leased labor, and it says they shall not work more than eight hours a day.

Another feature of an educational and technical character shall be introduced as shall be to the best interest of the inmates. The provision is to be used by the prison, and any surplus may be supplied to other State institutions or sold in the open market.

An appropriation of \$12,000 is made for the purpose of establishing the public account system not later than October, 1904; \$25,000 of this fund becomes available each year for five years, or the whole at the end of five years is to be used in the purchase of new materials, tools, apparatus, etc. The delay of five years was due to the fact that certain contracts were yet in force up to that date, and no future contracts are to be made until they expire later than October, 1904.

Many objections could be raised to this bill, but being common sense, it will not doubt meet with very general approval. I very much favor the public account system from a humanitarian standpoint. However, this system may grow to a curse and ruin the State.

My own conclusions are as follows: Education should always be a great factor in all penal and reformatory institutions. Labor should be given to all prisoners, and the State should be reformed for any reason. The hours of labor should not exceed eight a day.

A great variety of industries should be introduced into our penal institutions, and not more than fifty convicts should be employed in any single industry. Convicts imprisoned for more than two or three years should not be allowed to remain at the same task during all the years of this imprisonment, but should advance from one industry to another.

Convicts should receive some compensation, to go to their families, or if they have no family dependent upon them, then money should be held by the institution, to be paid them in quarterly installments after their discharge, when the sum is in excess of \$25.

There are yet many industries in which hand labor can be employed, and these should be introduced in preference to those requiring modern machinery. Contract, lease and piece price system should be done away with. Every possible effort should be made to fit the convict by industrial training to earn an honest living on his discharge. The public account system, with all its corruption and mismanagement, should be abandoned.

The parole law is wise, and I believe the benefits accruing therefrom are good, as it gives the younger offenders an opportunity of self-reformation, lessening the time of imprisonment and tending in every way to the reformation of the prisoner, also lessening the number of inmates in our penal institutions. The coming time of reform will unfold much along the line of reform, and unless the tremendous crush of commercialism be lessened and greater opportunities given men for employment, I fear the consequences. Certain it is that unless greater opportunities are given for employment, our reformatory and penal institutions will continue to increase in importance, as there will be a steady increase of criminals and their care will become more and more a burden of the State.

B. FRANK SCHMID.

STATE SCHOOLS.

Observations on the Question from the Farmers' Standpoint.

To the Editor of The Indianapolis News:

From time to time, in The News, has appeared able articles from different writers on State versus non-State schools. The verdict from a farmer's standpoint is that no further appropriations to the State schools should be made. Let them stand or fall on the merits of their work.

Now, that individual capital and enterprise are ready to occupy the educational field in the State, the question comes with great force. Why should the State be in competition, breaking down individual enterprise in educational work? Might not the State just as well compete against the manufacturing industries of the State, and try to break them down?

Let the money that now goes to the State schools be distributed pro rata to the common schools of the State, thereby lengthening the terms of the common schools of the State, say two months each year. Could any one estimate the benefits to our young people? It is right to give special educational privileges to the few at the expense of the taxpayers, as against the many? The young men and women that are the beneficiaries of the State schools are largely the children of parents who are unable to pay for their education. It seems, at least to me, that it is humiliating to start such young people in life as wards of the State.

This is a question that ought to be discussed by the paid speakers of the Farmers' Institutes, so that the farmers all over the State become familiar with both sides of it. I am sure if the farmers fully understood the situation, that they would overwhelmingly oppose to any further appropriations to the State schools. If the present Legislature would have the nerve to withhold further appropriations to the State schools and amend the present school laws, so that the money that now goes to the State schools should be distributed to the common schools of the State, the greatest good could be accomplished, and this Legislature would have a name in history that the people of the State would be proud of.

ROBERT MITCHELL.
Princeton, Ind., January 28.

LIFE INSURANCE LAWS.

A Suggestion that Companies Should Divide the Surplus.

To the Editor of The Indianapolis News:

I am informed that some of the large life insurance companies are proposing to make a vast improvement on their present policies, if they will provide a fair cash surrender value to their policy holders, who may be unable to continue paying the premiums, or to such as prefer the present cash to the policy.

I suggest further that this Legislature could not perhaps make a better law for the policy holders, than to compel companies to pay on surrender of the policy, its full cash value—the full cash value of a life policy and the restable share of the surplus held by the company, over and above the reserve liability which it is required to maintain by law.

The reports of any large company will show that it holds a surplus fund over all liabilities of many millions. This is more than one-fifth of its entire assets. When a policy holder of that company wishes to "cash out" his policy, he should be given him, and such proportion of this surplus as would be payable with his contribution to it. This would be fair to the policy holder and honest and fair to the company.

When he gives up the policy, it should be returned to him. Will the coming policy of the large companies be a policy? Will the Legislature see to it that the companies do their policy holders this justice?

JUSTICE.

The Usefulness of Insects.

To the Editor of The Indianapolis News:

The interesting and instructive communication in last Thursday's News by John P. Brown of Connersville, entitled "The Usefulness of Birds. They Serve to Reduce the Pest of Insects," should be followed by a companion picture headed above. Disclaiming any desire to pose as a bugologist (even in medicine), or to contravert in the least the eloquent facts above mentioned, let us look at the insects' side of the question.

It could easily be claimed that insects do the farmer more good than harm, while whole industries are entirely dependent upon them, the greatest being silk manufacture, now so important in this country; honey, etc., being also of great value in the aggregate. The greatest work of insects on behalf of the farmer is in the pollination or cross-fertilization of plants, flowers and fruit trees, an absolute essential of the existence or fruition of work of incalculable value to agriculture and to perpetuating our flora. Insects, alive and dead, play an important part in the changes going on in the soil which enables it to produce crops, and their value as scavengers as rotting innocuous dead animal or plant matter is great, while they eat the weeds and noxious plants which the farmer is often too busy or shiftless to eradicate. Without them the earth would become uninhabitable because of rank vegetation. The poultry and egg business of the United States is worth \$20,000,000 a year, and insects furnish the fowl food only limited by the range allowed them to roost in much of the food for birds and fishes. Insects help man, and man all over the world eats insects, such as locusts, crickets, beetles, cochineal, coral and polish berry dye are insects turned to man's use, and the Spanish fly (and that's not a war cry) has important uses as medicine.

The great thing we have to learn is how to train the beneficent insects to kill off the injurious ones, for, as Swift wrote:

Naturalists observe, a flea
Has smelt his death upon him prey;
And these have smaller still to bite 'em;
And so proceed ad infinitum.

Much progress has been made along this line in the last few years, though, to be sure, Pasteur's phylloxera for the grapevine was a great failure. The wheat-grower, for instance, need no longer fear the Hessian fly, for a parasite can be introduced to it that renders it harmless, and the beetle that attacks the California orange-growers' millions of dollars by destroying the cottony scale, has been well as reformed for both birds and insects, only in the eternal warfare of organism upon organism. We must learn to the best advantage which birds and which insects we want or do not want.

B. CLARKE, M. D.
Indianapolis, January 27.

The Smoke Nuisance.

To the Editor of The Indianapolis News:

During one of the sessions of the recent meeting of the National Municipal League, held in the Commodore Club's assembly room, the audience of distinguished strangers sat facing northward and having had an extended view of the city, had it not been that from a large chimney southwest of the monument a great mass of dense black smoke came which obscured everything north of Washington street. For two hours that great black mass held undisputed sway. It respected not the rights or value of industrial property or ornament. It swathed the Monument, figure and shaft, and the new group, leaving sooty deposits on all. It took in the library building, and the beautiful stone structure with which Mr. English has filled the northwest quadrant of the Circle.

Instead of the city's beauty, those strangers saw only an undulating mass of uncleanly soot, settling everywhere, and our citizens had spoken far and wide of our "clean city."

Why should the smoke nuisance longer continue, especially when devices for its suppression are known to be effectively used elsewhere, and even here in our own city, and more especially when these devices can be paid for over and over again by the saving of fuel?

H. M.

Spread of the Telephone Business.

To the Editor of The Indianapolis News:

The citizens of Darlington are very much interested in the rapid development of the independent telephone business. The recent granting of a franchise to put in a plant at Chicago, as well as the apparent irresistible march of the movement in the East, fills us with gratification.

The telephone means more to the farmer than it does to the resident of the large city, and my judgment is that it will have its greatest development in the next ten years in the rural districts. During the existence of Bell patents it was impossible for any farmer to have a telephone in his house; now there are between five and six thousand telephones in the houses of farmers in this State. In this immediate neighborhood and the adjoining sections of Fountain county nearly every fourth farmer has a telephone, and the demand for service is constantly increasing.

We are very much interested in the progress of the New Telephone Company and are looking forward to the days when we can talk with Indianapolis. We can order our goods by telephone and have our cattle and horses and the cattle and other markets of the country.

T. M. CAMPBELL.
Secretary Darlington Telephone Company.
Darlington, Ind., January 27, 1895.

Squirrels and Sparrows.

To the Editor of The Indianapolis News:

The beautiful little city of Kankakee, Ill., can teach many another town, village or city some lessons. Kankakee, to begin with, a beautiful place, where the residents own large town lots, which are well kept, and numerous fine, large shade trees abound. The citizens of that place believe in the primitive origin of communities for protection, mutual benefit and enjoyment. Among their city laws are two of more than passing interest. One of these laws provides for protection of squirrels, and places the fine for intentionally killing one, in any way, at \$5 and imprisonment. It has accomplished the work. There are hundreds of fox squirrels, as well as other kinds, in the town, and the citizens are proud to see them playing everywhere.

The other law has to do with the extermination of the English sparrow in that community. Two cents each is paid for them. They are taken to the auditor, who counts the money for and promptly cremates them. The boys go on killing sparrows with their target guns right among the squirrels, which have grown accustomed to it, as they have sufficient evidence to know that every human befriending them. Both laws are commendable.

W. J. QUICK.
Brooklyn.

The "Black Laws."

To the Editor of The Indianapolis News:

I have recently sent a letter to members of the Legislature, praying the repeal of the "black laws." The circular shows that these laws tend only to degrade and humiliate. The writer seemed to feel that Indiana should meet the twentieth century free from the evils of the nineteenth. The "black laws," with a single exception (Section 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352,

